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ABSTRACT

Assertions that a "crisis" exists in education have been made for over a hundred years. In spite of half a century of progressive education, followed by academic reform in the 1960s, the level of performance was still viewed with alarm in the 1970s and again in 1991, upon the release of Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores. Among the arguments are that: (1) educational reform has stalled; (2) teachers neither assign enough homework nor emphasize writing; (3) children watch too much television; (4) parents fail to encourage reading; and (5) the culture undervalues academic achievement. Teacher preparation is also an area of contention. In reality, a comparison of 1960 and 1990 statistics shows that there has been an impressive increase in hours required for English teacher certification. Of 35 states examined, nearly two-thirds increased hours required by 50% or more and over a third doubled the requirement. Subject-content courses for English teachers have also increased substantially. The College Strand of the English Coalition proposes that English education should emphasize learning rather than teaching and be accompanied by courses in learning theory and adolescent development. How such changes will affect English teacher preparation and the achievement of public school students remains to be seen. (Three tables of data are included.) (SG)

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Changes in English Teacher Certification Requirements from 1960 to 1990

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The quality of education in American schools is rightfully a matter of concern to taxpayers and the public at large, and this concern is reflected in the continuing attention education receives in the news media. Unfortunately, the media accounts tend to magnify the negative aspects, and the situation is frequently referred to as a "crisis." If it is in fact a crisis, it must be the longest crisis in history. The Quincy, Massachusetts School Committee was reported to have discovered in 1875 that after eight years of attendance in the public schools, "the children could neither write with facility nor read fluently; nor could they speak or spell their own language very perfectly" (Partridge, 1885, p. xiv). The Quincy School Committee responded to their "crisis" by hiring Professor Francis W. Parker as Superintendent of Schools. Professor Parker must have convinced the public that his approach to the problem had merit, for he was hired as Supervisor in the Boston Schools five years later. But whatever success Professor Parker achieved in Massachusetts must have been local and temporary in its effect. Some three decades later, Edwin M. Hopkins (1912) in the lead article in the first issue of English Journal lamented the generally low level of literacy in these words: "Every year thousands of pupils drift through the schools, half-cared for in English classes where they should have constant and encouraging personal attention, and neglected in other classes where their English should be watched over at least incidentally, to emerge in a more or less damaged linguistic condition, incapable of meeting satisfactorily the simplest practical demand upon their powers of expression" (p. 1).

Negative assessments of the American educational enterprise sound much the same, regardless of the decade in which they were uttered. In spite of half a century of

Progressive education, followed by academic reform in the 1960s, the level of performance was still viewed with alarm in the 1970s. Readers of Newsweek were informed in the education feature article in the December 8, 1975, issue of that publication that college students upon graduation would likely be "unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and lucidity." Students in high school and planning to attend college were viewed as having less than even chances that they would be able "to write English at the minimal college level when they get there," and children in elementary school were seen as "almost certainly not being given the kind of reading material, much less writing instruction, that might make it possible for them eventually to write comprehensible English" (Sheils, 1975, p. 65).

Following release of the 1991 Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, there were numerous additional newspaper articles lamenting the sad state of American education. One interpretation of the low scores was that the country's education reform efforts have stalled, and suggested reasons included the schools' not assigning enough homework and not stressing writing, children's excessive television viewing, parents' failure to encourage their children to read, and the peer culture's undervaluing of school achievement.

Another reason for dissatisfaction with the level of educational performance, often cited or implied in numerous critiques, is the preparation of teachers in today's schools. If students are not doing well, so the logic goes, it must be the fault of teachers who are not doing a good job; and if teachers are not doing a good job, it must be the fault of teacher-preparation programs. A report issued by the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government (cited in an Associated Press release on September 16,

1991) lays the blame for low achievement in science and mathematics directly on poorly prepared teachers. According to that report, more than two-thirds of elementary school science teachers lack adequate preparation in science and more than 80% of math instructors are deficient in mathematics.

Many critics of American education go on to lambast the "teachers' colleges" and their alleged emphasis on professional education courses at the expense of subject-content courses. Usually overlooked is the fact that most teachers' colleges have now evolved into universities, and the additional fact that approved teacher-preparation programs consist largely of courses taught in colleges of arts and sciences. Often implied, if not overtly stated, is the assumption that teacher preparation programs in the past required a great deal more course work in academic subjects than they do now. If English is in any way representative of the subjects taken by prospective teachers, the facts appear to be otherwise.

The National Interest and the Teaching of English (National Council of Teachers of English, 1961) gives a useful profile of the situation 30 years ago. That report, part of an effort to have English covered by provisions of the National Defense Education Act, includes results of a survey of 374 institutions of higher education engaged in the preparation of high school English teachers. Of these institutions, 34% did not require prospective English teachers to take more than 24 semester hours in English courses beyond the freshman level, and only 14% required more than 30 semester hours. No comparable current data are available, but impressions based on general knowledge of approved teacher-preparation programs lead to the conclusion that current requirements

as low as 24 semester hours are rare. Most require the equivalent of an academic major in English, and some require more. At the University of Georgia, for example, an English major requires 40 quarter hours (27 semester hours) of English courses above the sophomore level; the approved program in English Education requires 55 quarter hours in the teaching field (37 semester hours). These courses are usually all upper-division courses, and they are in addition to at least four lower-division English courses taken in the undergraduate core.

The 1961 survey found that only 25% of the 374 institutions required a course in history of the English language, 17% a course in modern English grammar, 11% a formal grammar review, and 41% an advanced composition course. The authors of the report concluded that "most of the English majors who were graduated in June 1960, and are now teaching in high school are simply not equipped to deal with problems of teaching the language and composition. . ." (p. 75).

The National Interest report (p. 43) also gives statistics on certification requirements for English teachers, requirements that are probably more truly indicative of the level of preparation of employed teachers than are degree requirements. The median number of semester hours of English required as minimum preparation to teach English in American high schools in 1961 was 18; only five states required English teachers to have completed as much as 30 semester hours in English courses, and in 16 states the requirement was no more than 12 semester hours for the part-time teaching of English.

A more detailed depiction of certification requirements in the various states is given in Slaughter's (1964) survey report. Comparing state certification requirements in 1964 with those in effect in 1960, Slaughter states that "the minimum in English (often including speech, dramatics, and journalism) required for teaching English as a full load of 3 or more classes ranges from 12 to 40 hours for both years, median 18 hours in 1960, 24 hours in 1964" (p. 593). In more specific terms, Slaughter states that in 1964, for teaching English as a principal assignment in high school, two states required the teacher to have only 12 hours of college English, five states 15 hours, three states 16 hours, seven states 18 hours, one state 19 hours, two states 20 hours, one state 22 hours, 19 states 24 hours, one state 28 hours, six states 30 hours, four states 36 hours, and one state 40 hours. The mean number of semester hours required in 1964 for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico was 22.25. Comparable figures for 1960, with a mean of 20.58, are as follows: four states required 12 hours, 10 states 15 hours, three states 16 hours, eight states 18 hours, two states 20 hours, 18 states 24 hours, one state 28 hours, four states 30 hours, and one state 40 hours. Puerto Rico required an English major but did not specify the number of hours.

In a subsequent survey, Slaughter (1968) found only a slight increase in minimum certification requirements. The requirement for teaching a full load of three or more classes ranged from 12 to 40, with a median of 24 hours, the same as in 1964. The mean number of required hours had increased from 22.25 to 23.27. More specifically, in 1967, for teaching English as a principal assignment in high school, three states required the teacher to have only 12 hours of college English, five states 15 hours, two states 16

hours, nine states 18 hours, one state 19 hours, two states 20 hours, one state 22 hours, 14 states 24 hours , one state 28 hours, eight states 30 hours, five states 36 hours, and one state 40 hours.

In order to compare current requirements for certification to teach English with those in effect in 1960, I sent a letter in November 1990 requesting information on current requirements to certification officers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The primary aim of the survey was to observe changes in the number of hours required in English. A secondary aim was to observe the balance of requirements in English and education courses. Several of the responses failed to provide data that could be compared with the Slaughter survey. Some indicated that teacher certification was based on applicants' completion of an approved teacher preparation program, some indicated a list of competencies to be achieved, and others indicated that their criteria were identical to NASDTEC standards (NASDTEC did not respond to requests for their current standards). I then sent a second letter to the state certification offices requesting specific information on semester-hour requirements. Combined responses to the two requests provided data on English requirements from 35 (67%) of the certification offices that could be compared with the earlier surveys. It should be noted that, because of the different ways requirements are stated, precise comparisons are not possible; these differences are evident in the footnotes to the Slaughter survey reports. Only 24 (46%) of the responses provided comparable data on professional education requirements.

While it would obviously be desirable to have precisely comparable data from all of the states represented in the 1960 survey, it appears that the available data from 35 certification offices provide the basis for a valid and useful comparison of certification requirements in English in 1960 and 1990. That the sample is representative of the population is confirmed by the measures of central tendency. The mean for the population is 20.58 and for the sample 20.09. The median for both is 18, and the mode for both is 24.

The 35 states included in the sample are listed with comparable data for 1960 and 1990 in Table 1.

Table 1

Semester Hours in English Required for English Teacher Certification in 34 States and the District of Columbia, 1960 and 1990

State	1960	1990	Increase Hours	Increase Percent
Alabama	18	27	9	50
Arizona	15	30	15	100
California	20	30	10	50
Connecticut	30	30	0	0
District of Columbia	30	36	6	20
Florida	30	30	0	0
Georgia	12	40	28	233
Idaho	15	20	5	33.3
Illinois	16	32	16	100
Indiana	24	36	12	50
Iowa	15	24	9	60
Kentucky	24	48	24	100
Louisiana	24	27	3	12.5
Maine	15	36	21	140
Maryland	24	36	12	50
Massachusetts	18	36	18	100
Michigan	15	30	15	100
Minnesota	15	36	21	140
Missouri	24	30	6	25
Montana	20	30	10	50
Nebraska	18	30	12	66.7
Nevada	16	36	20	125
New Jersey	24	30	6	25
New York	24	36	12	50
North Dakota	18	18	0	0
Ohio	24	30	6	25
Oklahoma	15	40	25	166.7
Oregon	28	30	2	7
Rhode Island	15	30	15	100
South Dakota	15	21	6	40
Tennessee	24	24	0	0
Texas	18	24	6	33.3
Utah	12	45	33	275
Virginia	24	36	12	50
Wyoming	24	36	12	50
Mean	20.09	31.71	11.62	57.84
Median	18	30	12	50
Mode	24	30	12, 6 (bimodal)	50

Of the states included in the 35-state sample for 1960, two required a minimum of 12 semester hours in English, nine required 15 hours, two required 16 hours, five required 18 hours, two required 20 hours, 1 required 24 hours, one required 28 hours, and three required 30 hours. Of the same group in 1990, the lowest number of required hours was 18, and only three states required less than 24 semester hours in English; three states required 24 hours, two required 27 hours, 12 required 30 hours, one required 32 hours, 10 required 36 hours, two required 40 hours, one required 45 hours, and one required 48 hours. The mean for these 35 states increased from 20.09 to 31.71 semester hours, an average increase of 11.62 hours (57.84%), or the equivalent of four three-semester hour courses.

The increase in minimum hours required for English teacher certification is truly impressive. Only four states in the 35-state sample required the same number of hours in 1990 as they required in 1960. More than half (18) of the states increased requirements by 12 semester hours or more, and one-fifth (7) increased requirements by 20 hours or more. Stated another way, nearly two-thirds (22) of the states had an increase of 50% or more in the minimum number of hours required for certification to teach English, and more than one-third (12) of the states had an increase of 100% or more.

In spite of the fact that exact comparisons for 1960 and 1990 are not possible (courses in dramatics, journalism, speech, and reading are included in the teaching major in some instances, and some states' requirements include lower-division courses), there is ample evidence to conclude that the proportion of subject-content courses required in

the preparation of English teachers has increased substantially in the past 30 years. And to the extent that quantitative standards affect program quality, this evidence negates the claims of those critics who attribute a perceived decline in effectiveness of public education to lack of subject content in teacher preparation in English.

Responses from 24 certification offices provided data on professional education requirements in 1990 that could be compared with those in effect in 1960. The mean number of education hours required in 1960 was 20.21; the mean in 1990 was 23.17 hours, an increase equivalent to only one three-semester hour course. Nine (37.5%) of the states required the same number of hours in 1990 as in 1960; three (12.5%) reduced the requirement; 12 (50%) increased the requirement. The 24 states and their requirements are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Semester Hours Required in Professional Education
in 24 States in 1960 and in 1990

State	1960	1990	Increase
Alabama	24	42	18
Arizona	24	30	6
California	22	24	2
Florida	20	20	0
Georgia	18	30	12
Idaho	20	20	0
Illinois	16	16	0
Kentucky	18	25	7
Maine	24	24	0
Michigan	20	20	0
Missouri	18	14	-4
Montana	16	16	0
Nevada	18	22	4
North Dakota	16	26	10
Ohio	17	24	7
Oklahoma	21	30	9
Oregon	24	24	0
Rhode Island	24	24	0
South Dakota	20	21	1
Tennessee	24	24	0
Texas	24	18	-6
Utah	22	20	-2
Virginia	15	18	3
Wyoming	20	24	4
Mean	20.21	23.17	2.96
Median	20	24	
Mode	24	24	

Of the 24 responses that allowed comparison of requirements in professional education courses with English courses, in 1960 (see Table 3) thirteen states (54%) required more education than English, two states (8.33%) required the same number of hours in both, and nine states (37.5%) required less education than English. The means

Table 3

Comparison of Minimum Requirements in Professional Education and English in 24 States in 1960 and 1990

State	1960 Min. Hours in Education	1960 Min. Hours in English	1990 Min. Hours in Education	1990 Min. Hours in English
Alabama	24	18	42	27
Arizona	24	15	30	30
California	22	20	24	30
Florida	20	30	20	30
Georgia	18	12	30	40
Idaho	20	15	20	20
Illinois	16	16	16	32
Kentucky	18	24	25	48
Maine	24	15	24	36
Michigan	20	15	20	30
Missouri	18	24	14	30
Montana	16	20	16	30
Nevada	18	16	22	36
North Dakota	16	18	26	18
Ohio	17	24	24	30
Oklahoma	21	15	30	40
Oregon	24	28	24	30
Rhode Island	24	15	24	30
South Dakota	20	15	21	21
Tennessee	24	24	24	24
Texas	24	18	18	24
Utah	22	12	20	45
Virginia	15	24	18	36
Wyoming	20	24	24	36
Mean	20.21	19.04	23.17	31.37

are 20.21 and 19.04, with average requirements in education exceeding those in English by slightly more than one (1.17) semester hour. In 1990 only two states (8.33%) of the 24 required more education than English, three (12.5%) required the same in both, and eighteen (75%) required more English than education. The means for 1990 are 23.17 and 31.37, with average requirements in English exceeding those in education by 10.2 semester hours. The 1960 mean of 19.04 hours in English is 94% of the mean

requirement in education (20.21) for the 24 states. The mean of 31.37 hours in English in 1990 is 135% of the mean in education (23.17). These data show a dramatic reversal in the balance between education and English requirements between 1960 and 1990.

One thing is clear from these data and another can be inferred: The number of hours in English courses required for English teacher certification is higher than it was 30 years ago, and it is likely that the number of hours required by colleges and universities for a teaching major in English is also higher. To the extent that certification requirements reflect the level of academic preparation of secondary English teachers, these data show that people teaching English in today's classrooms are much better prepared than were their counterparts 30 years ago. And it can be argued that increasing the required number of hours in English at the expense of education courses would not likely result directly in an increase in the quality of teacher preparation, nor indirectly in a higher level of literacy in the public schools. This is not to say that improvements in teacher preparation programs are not needed. No doubt, there is a great deal of room for improvement, but it needs to be improvement in the quality of required courses, not an increase in the number of the same kinds of courses we now have.

The Holmes Group, in Tomorrow's Teachers (1986), while calling for the elimination of undergraduate education majors, recognizes that the level of teachers' performance cannot be attributed simply to insufficient course work in the subjects they teach (p. 16). In their agenda for improvement, they urge universities to take three steps to strengthen education in academic subjects. The first step is to revise the

undergraduate curriculum "so that future teachers can study the subjects they will teach with instructors who model fine teaching and who understand the pedagogy of their material." The second step is to organize academic requirements and courses, "so that undergraduate students can gain a sense of the intellectual structure and boundaries of their disciplines, rather than taking a series of disjointed, prematurely specialized fragments." The third step is to devise coherent programs "that will support the advanced studies in pedagogy required for solid professional education" (p. 17).

The College Strand of the English Coalition, which met in the summer of 1987, has offered general recommendations for changes in the undergraduate curriculum for English majors. Their suggested general education courses in the humanities include courses that relate to the following areas:

- Knowledge and language in the sciences and humanities
- Interpretation and texts in Eastern and Western cultures
- Metaphor in language and cognition
- Change in literary and nonliterary history
- Reading in print and other media
- Dialects and the relativity of "Standard English"
- "Great Books" and the process of canonization
- Racial and sexual difference in reading and writing
- The concept of "genre" in writing and interpretation.

(Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, 1989, p. 31)

In addition to reading a wide variety of texts and engaging in diverse types of writing, all students majoring in English should be able to "inquire into the complex functions of language, especially in relation to their own and other cultures; the ways in which meanings are created; the nature of literature; the relationships between readers and texts, authors and texts, literature and society, and reading and writing in their

experiential and historical dimension" (p. 33). Participants in the College Strand reached consensus on the following requirements for English majors:

1. All majors should know several methodologies of reading and interpretation, be acquainted with the premises and the modes of arguing that each pursues, and be aware of issues connected with a choice of one perspective versus another. Examples of such methods of reading and interpretation include aesthetic, biographical, formalist, gender-specific, rhetorical, and political.

2. All English majors should know something of the critical and historical principles behind the construction of literary and cultural histories. They should know the terminology of literary periods, be aware of controversies concerning the establishment of distinctions between periods, and understand the general significances attached to various views taken of the transitions between periods. They should also have opportunities to examine the status of the concept of nationality as it appears in literary study.

3. All English majors should know something about the study of language and discursive practices. Avenues to such knowledge include study in the history of language, formal grammar and rhetoric, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, and semiotics.

4. All English majors should have the experience of reading texts drawn from the full diversity of literary periods and genres, written by authors representing the full range of social, ethnic, and national origins that have contributed to the corpus of literature in English. They should also have experience with critical texts and with expository prose and other types of writings that have frequently not been made use of in the curriculum of the major, including writing by their fellow students.

5. All English majors should practice writing in several modes and for different audiences and purposes, with an awareness of the social implications and theoretical issues these shifts raise. Classroom practice should bring teachers and students to experience writing, reading, listening, and speaking as integrated, mutually supporting exercises. (p. 35)

For those who plan to teach, courses in English education should emphasize learning rather than teaching and be accompanied by courses in learning theory and adolescent development. With its emphasis on "how to do English rather than what English is," the proposed English major "will better address the needs of preservice and inservice

teachers" (p. 36). The models that college English instructors should offer prospective teachers "will place a self-conscious emphasis on the major issues in English studies." In accord with those models, teachers will come to ask these questions: "How do people learn from texts?" "How does one read a text?" "How does the teaching of texts in particular ways affect the ways students learn about them?" "How does the classroom construct knowledge?" (p. 36).

How these recommendations can or will be translated into improved programs for the preparation of English teachers and what effect such improved programs will have on the achievement of public school pupils remain to be seen.

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